



THE LIBERTY "BOYS OF 76"

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

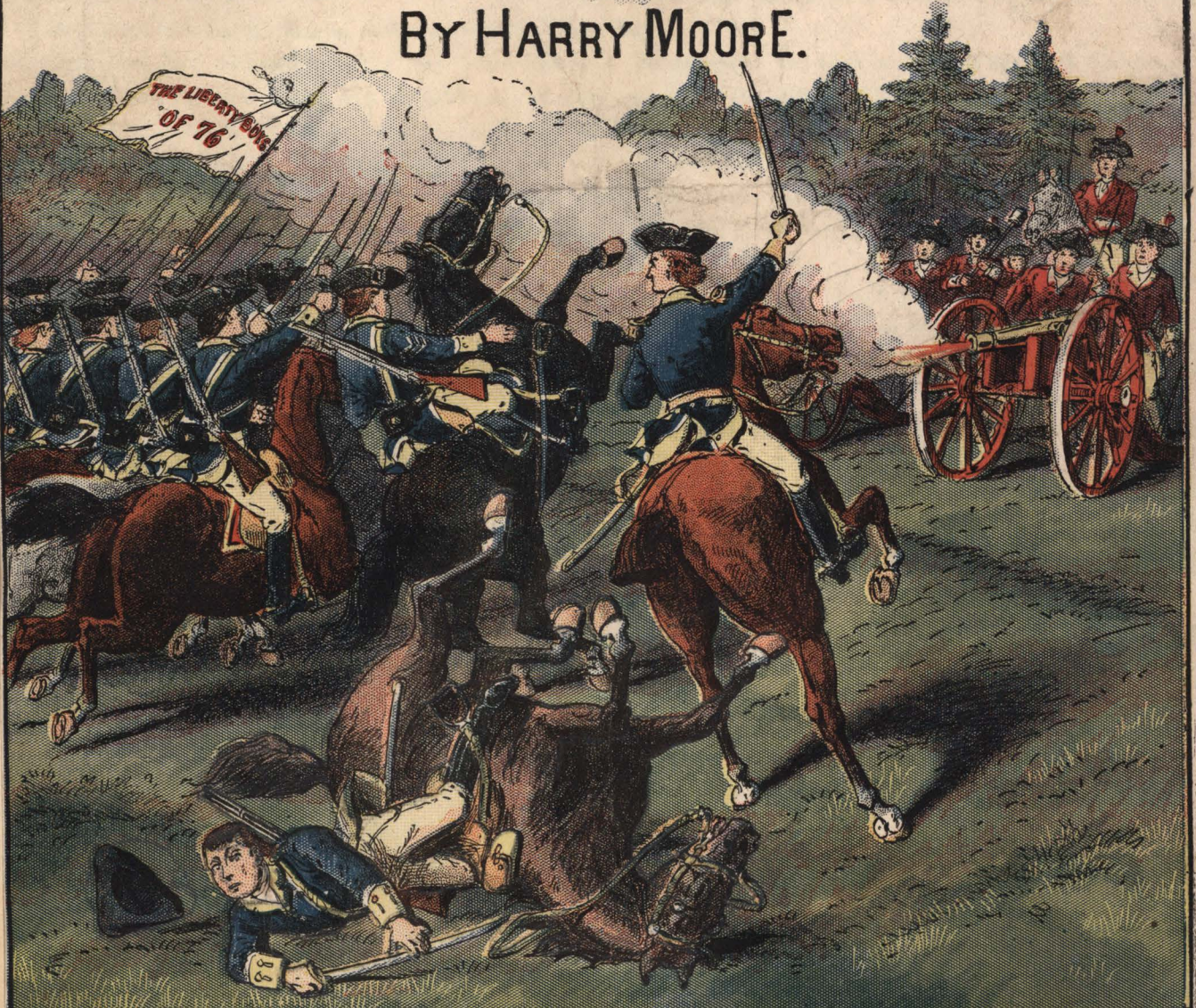
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No. 36.

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 6, 1901.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS' DARING WORK: OR RISKING LIFE FOR LIBERTY'S CAUSE. BY HARRY MOORE.



The fire was something terrific, but the "Liberty Boys" dashed on regardless of everything save the cause they were fighting for. "On, boys, don't falter!" yelled Dick, waving his sword.

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CHAPTER I.

TWO "LIBERTY BOYS" AT HOME.

Early summer of the year 1778.

The patriot army, after the battle of Monmouth, had moved northeastward to the Hudson River, and, crossing the river, had made its way to White Plains where it went into camp.

General Clinton, the British commander-in-chief, had taken his army to New York City after the battle of Monmouth.

The patriot and British armies now occupied the same positions they had occupied in 1776, two years before.

At that time General Howe was in command of the British forces, with headquarters at New York, but he had been superseded by General Clinton.

While the positions of the army were the same as they had been two years before, the conditions were exactly reversed.

Then, the British had been the aggressors, and the patriots were on the defensive.

Now, the patriot army was on the aggressive and the British were on the defensive.

Clinton's main object was to hold New York City.

General Washington's object was to wrest the city from the British, if possible.

If he could not do this, then he wished to deal them a blow of some kind.

In order that he might have a reasonable chance for success in anything he might attempt, it was necessary that he should know just how the British were situated.

It would be a difficult matter to secure such information.

The only way to secure it was by sending spies down into the city.

General Washington decided to do this.

He knew where to look for a man to do this difficult and dangerous work.

In the ranks of the patriot army was a company of youths known as "The Liberty Boys of '76."

Not one of the youths was yet twenty years of age.

These youths had been in service two years.

During those two years they had done wonderful work. They had made themselves famous by their daring and desperate work on the battlefield.

Whenever there was any especially daring piece of work to be done, the "Liberty Boys" were always among those selected to do the work.

Two of the youths, especially, had made themselves famous as scouts and spies.

The two youths in question were Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook.

Dick was the captain of the company of "Liberty Boys."

So successful had Dick been in his spy work that he had been given the title of "The champion spy of the Revolution."

As soon as he had decided to send a spy to New York City, General Washington sent for Dick.

Dick did not delay in presenting himself at Washington's headquarters.

The commander-in-chief greeted Dick cordially.

"Dick," he said, "I have some work for you."

"I am glad of that, your excellency," replied the youth, promptly.

There was a look on the youth's face which proved that he meant what he said.

Washington's iron-like face relaxed into a smile.

"I do not doubt that, Dick," he said, "I have ever found you more than willing to do any work which I asked you to do."

The commander-in-chief was silent for a few moments. Then he looked at the youth and said:

"Dick, I wish to capture the British force under General Clinton and recover New York City, if possible."

"I hope you may succeed, sir," said Dick, earnestly.

"There is only one way to succeed and that is by knowing just what I am going to try to do, and the only way to know what to do, is to secure definite information regarding the number of British in the city, the character and location of the defenses and everything of that kind; and the only way to do that is by sending a keen and capable spy down into the city. Now you know why I have sent for you."

Dick's face flushed with pleasure.

There was an eager light in his eyes.

He was pleased by the implied compliment from the great man.

Then, too, there was nothing in the world that he enjoyed more than the work of a spy.

He delighted in going into the lines of the enemy and working all sorts of schemes to secure information.

The great danger which was always attached to such work was but spice to it all.

He was young, and he did not take the danger into consideration.

He was utterly fearless.

Still Dick was cautious.

To be reckless and get captured after he had secured valuable information would nullify his work.

Therefore, for the good of the cause more than out of consideration for his safety, Dick was always as cautious and careful as circumstances would permit.

"You wish me to go down into New York City and spy upon the British?" Dick remarked.

"Yes, Dick."

"When do you wish me to go?"

"At the earliest possible moment."

"Very good; I will start to-day."

"It will not be safe for you to try to enter the city in the daytime, Dick."

"I shall not try to do so, sir; I shall ride over to Tarrytown, spend a few hours at home and will then go on down to the city. I will time my departure at home so that it will be dark before I get to New York City."

"That will be a good plan, Dick."

Dick remained at headquarters a while longer.

When he had received all the instructions General Washington thought it necessary to give him, the youth took his departure.

He returned to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys."

"Want to take a little trip, Bob?" asked Dick of a handsome youth of about his own age.

The youth was Bob Estabrook.

"Where to, Dick?"

"Over home to see the folks."

Bob Estabrook leaped to his feet in excitement.

"Do I want to go, Dick!" he exclaimed. "Well, I guess I do."

"All right; get ready, then."

"I'm ready now; when do we start?"

"Right away after dinner."

"And it's dinner-time now. Good!"

The youths ate their dinner, and, mounting their horses, rode away.

Crossing the Bronx River, they rode in a westerly direction.

It was seven miles from White Plains to Tarrytown, but not quite that far to the homes of Dick and Bob, which were within a quarter of a mile of each other on adjoining farms distant about a mile from Tarrytown.

The youths had not been home for several months.

As may be supposed, they were eager to get there.

They rode at a swift gallop.

As they neared their homes, an eager, expectant look appeared on the youths' faces.

"Think the folks will be glad to see us, Dick?" asked Bob, with a grin.

He knew they would, of course.

Dick laughed.

"What do you think about it?" was his counter-question.

"I guess sister Alice will be glad to see you, Dick!" with another grin.

"And I have no doubt sister Edith will be glad to see a fellow about your size, Bob!" with a smile.

"I hope so, by Jove!" said Bob.

The youths were in love with each other's sister.

The girls—two as pretty, sweet and lovable girls as ever lived, by the way—loved Dick and Bob dearly.

When the war ended, if it ever did, the two young couples were to be married.

As long as the war continued the youths' duty was to their country, and to the great cause of Liberty.

They would be soldiers, and fight as long as their arms were needed to help strike blows for Liberty.

The girls, brave as they were sweet, approved of this view of the case.

Hard as it was, they did not complain at having their sweethearts away from them for months at a time. They knew the youths were doing good work for the cause, and they would not murmur.

As the youths rode up to the fence in front of the house occupied by Dick's mother and sister—his father had been murdered by Tories two years before—two beautiful girls rushed out through the open doorway and ran down the path toward the gate.

"Dick! Bob! Mamma, it's Dick and Bob! It's Dick and Bob!" the girls cried.

They were wildly excited; they were wild with delight. If they were delighted, so were the youths.

The youths leaped down off their horses.

They did not stop to tie the animals.

They did not have time for that.

Instead, they rushed through the gate and seized the girls in their arms and hugged and kissed them.

"Alice! Edith!"

"Dick! Bob!"

That was all that was said.

There was no need for words.

Two women of middle age came hastening out of the house.

They were Mrs. Slater and Mrs. Estabrook.

When they reached the scene, the youths released the girls and each seized his mother in his arms and kissed her.

"Where did you boys come from?"

"Have you been wounded?"

"How long are you going to stay?"

"Oh, I am so glad you have come!"

Such were a few of the exclamations given utterance to. The youths laughingly told the girls and their mothers to give them time.

"One question at a time, please!" laughed Bob.

Dick told them why he and Bob were there.

"I am on my way to New York to do some spy work," he said, "and as I intended to come past home and stop a while, I made Bob come along with me."

"He didn't have much trouble 'making' me come!" grinned Bob.

"I should guess not!" said Alice Estabrook, with a roguish look at Edith Slater.

"That's a dig at me," laughed Edith; "well, Alice, I could give you a dig in return if I chose, but I will be good-natured and refrain."

"How could any of us help being good-natured when the boys have come home to us, safe and sound?" Mrs. Slater remarked.

"We could not help being good-natured under such circumstances," said Mrs. Estabrook.

"I'll run over and tell papa you've come home."

"I'll go along," said Dick.

The two started in the direction of Mr. Estabrook's house, which was less than a quarter of a mile distant, by way of the orchard through which a path ran.

"Father'll find out we're here some time next week," said Bob, with a grin. "You'd have to set pegs to see whether or not they're moving."

"That's all right, Bob!" replied Dick, laughingly. "You now all about such things by your own personal experience."

Mrs. Slater insisted that all should remain at her house throughout the afternoon, and take an early supper with

her. Dick would have to go on to New York at an hour or so of sundown, but Bob could remain later, if he chose. That he would so choose, goes without saying.

It was a happy little party that was there in Mrs. Slater's house that afternoon.

They did not let the thought that they would be together but a few hours interfere with their enjoyment of the present.

The time flew all too swiftly, however.

Mrs. Slater, assisted by Mrs. Estabrook, got up a splendid supper.

To the youths, accustomed as they were to coarse, unpalatable army fare, the meal was a treat, indeed.

They enjoyed it immensely.

Dick remained until it was well along toward sundown, and then he mounted, and, bidding good-by to all, rode away in the direction of New York.

He had promised that he would come back past there on his return, and let them know what success he had had down in the city.

It was about twenty miles to New York City.

It would take Dick two hours and a half to go this distance.

Of course, he could go the distance in quicker time, but it would not be wise to do so.

He would have to be extremely careful in entering the city.

An hour and a half from the time he left home, Dick crossed the Harlem River.

He crossed on a bridge, and he was not much surprised when, as he rode off the bridge, he heard the sharp challenge:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

CHAPTER II.

THE REDCOAT AND HIS FLASK.

The voice sounded close in front of Dick.

He brought his horse to a stop instantly.

He asked himself what he should do.

He had half a mind to ride into the timber at the side of the road.

Before he could put this into execution, however, the dark forms of two men appeared in the road immediately in front of him.

The men were British pickets.

They carried muskets, and the muskets were promptly levelled at Dick's head.

"Who are you?" was the stern query.

"A friend," replied Dick.

"Give the countersign, then."

"I don't know the countersign," replied Dick.

He had decided to stand his ground and try to deceive the redcoats in some manner.

He might be able to do this.

In that case he would be allowed to proceed, unmolested.

This would be better than to have to make a break to escape, and risk being shot.

Dick was prepared to do this last, however, in case he failed of deceiving the redcoats.

"Who are you, and where do you hail from, that you are trying to enter the lines, and have not the countersign?" was the stern query.

"I am Mart Spencer, sir," replied Dick; "and I am on my way to the city to get a doctor for my sick father."

"Oh, that's it, eh?"

The tone of the sentinel was doubting.

"Yes, that is it," replied Dick; "and if you will be so kind, I will be pleased to continue on my way. Every minute is precious, and may mean the life or death of my father."

"Where do you live?"

"Up in the neutral lands, sir."

"Haven't they any doctors up there?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you get one of them, then?"

"We have already had two, sir, but they said they could do nothing for my father, and I am on my way to get the best doctor in the city, in the hope that he may be able to save my father's life."

The pickets seemed to be undecided.

They whispered to each other.

Finally they came to a decision.

"We will let you pass," said one; "but one of us will accompany you down to the city and will come back this far with you. We would not like to be the means of causing the death of any one by refusing to allow a doctor to be sent for, but we have no assurance that you are speaking the truth. If you are, you will not object to one of us accompanying you; and if you are not, then we will be doing our duty to the cause of the king."

Of course, Dick could not enter objections to this plan.

He did not wish to be accompanied, of course, but to object would be to lay himself under suspicion at once. No, he would have to let the redcoat accompany him and then manage to get rid of him in some manner.

He spoke up promptly:

"That is satisfactory, of course. All I want is a chance

to get a doctor for my father; but I am sorry to be the means of causing you so much trouble."

"Oh, that doesn't matter," was the reply; "one of us might as well be doing that as sitting here doing nothing."

"I'll go and get the horse," said the other redcoat.

"All right," was the reply from his comrade. "I'll keep my eye on this fellow while you are gone."

The picket disappeared.

He was gone only a few minutes.

Then he returned, leading a horse.

He said something to his comrade, in a low tone, and then mounted the horse.

"Go ahead," he said to Dick; "I will ride behind you."

This was a clever plan.

It would make it extremely difficult for Dick to try any scheme for getting rid of the fellow.

Dick did not dare offer objections, of course.

He must pretend to be perfectly satisfied with everything that was said and done by the redcoats.

It was the only way to keep them from deciding that he was a patriot and a spy.

Dick was not alarmed, at all, however.

He had been in too many tight places in the two years past to be alarmed by anything.

He considered that he was in very good shape as yet.

He was free, and had his weapons.

He wondered that the redcoats had not searched him to see if he was armed.

Perhaps they had believed his statement.

Be that as it may, they had not searched Dick.

At the command, Dick started his horse.

He rode onward, toward the city.

Behind him rode the redcoat.

It was about nine miles to the city.

It would take an hour and a half to reach there.

This would give Dick ample time to think up some plan for working the undoing of the British soldier.

So he gave the matter not much thought at present.

He wished to take it coolly and calmly, and do nothing in a hurry.

He had always found this the best plan.

The redcoat did not seem to care about talking.

He maintained silence.

So did Dick.

Presently the redcoat began to whistle.

"He is well satisfied with his work, I judge," the youth thought.

Presently the redcoat began to sing.

He had a very good voice, and he sang some camp songs, in quite an acceptable manner.

"He seems to be happy," thought Dick.

The redcoat sang several songs, and then lapsed into silence.

Presently he began again.

He sang louder than before, and with less rhythm.

There was a certain thickness to his voice, too, which attracted the youth's attention.

He understood what it meant.

"The fellow is drinking!" he said to himself. "Good! I am glad of that. It will simplify matters greatly."

Dick at once dismissed all worry from his mind.

If his guard was getting drunk, there would be no difficulty in getting away from him, presently.

Had Dick had the ordering of things, he could not have had it fixed more to his liking.

"Go ahead and drink yourself into a state of intoxication as soon as you like," he thought; "and when you have done so, I will do my work."

Dick got to studying.

He wondered if he might not be able to turn this circumstance to his interest.

Presently a thought struck him.

Why not wait till the redcoat was drunk, then make him a prisoner and change clothing with him?

Dick believed he would have a better chance to learn what he wished to know if he were dressed in a British uniform than if he were dressed in citizen's clothing—as was the case with him.

Had Dick been possessed of a British uniform he would have donned it before starting to New York on this affair; now he had an opportunity to get a uniform, and he thought he would improve the opportunity.

He rode onward at a moderate pace.

He was in no hurry.

He wished to give the redcoat all the opportunity necessary for getting good and drunk.

Dick had a good barometer, in the voice of the redcoat.

It was a sure indication of the owner's state.

The voice was quite thick now.

And the thicker the voice got the more the owner thought it necessary to exercise it.

He kept on singing.

Presently the redcoat's singing deteriorated into maudlin doggerel.

"He's getting pretty drunk," thought Dick; "he will be in such a state that I will be able to do as I please with him, soon."

Dick waited patiently.

Presently he heard the sound of the redcoat's horse close behind him.

"He is coming up alongside me," the youth thought; "I wonder what he is going to do?"

The youth was not kept long in doubt.

The drunken man rode up beside Dick.

"Have 'er (hic) drin' 'ith me," he said, with a hic-cough; "'ave got sum might' good stuff, I tell y'. Haver drin'."

"All right," replied Dick, promptly; "I'll drink with you. But take another drink yourself, first."

This suggestion met with favor in the redcoat's eyes.

"All ri'," he said, in maudlin tones; "all ri'; yer er gen'l'm'n, you are!"

The redcoat placed his flask to his mouth and took a good swig.

It was not so dark but that Dick could see his companion fairly well.

The redcoat took the flask away from his mouth, smacked his lips and said:

"Might' good stuff!"

"You had better keep it for yourself," suggested Dick. "I am not much of a hand for liquor. Keep it, and drink it yourself."

This did not suit the redcoat at all.

He was at that stage when he wanted everybody to drink.

"Won' do't!" he said, bluntly. "You've gotter drink 'ith me! Y' don' think y' are better than me, d' y'?"

"Oh, no, of course not," was Dick's reply.

"Then y've gotter drin'—unnerstan'?"

"Certainly, certainly! I'll drink, but I thought that, as you enjoy the liquor more than I do, you might as well have it."

"No mat'r; wan' y' t' drin'—y've gotter drin'!"

"Oh, all right!" said Dick. "Hand me the flask."

The redcoat did so.

Dick took the flask.

He made a pretence of drinking.

It was easy to deceive the fellow.

In the darkness, and with his vision somewhat impaired by the fumes of the liquor, he could not see that Dick did not drink.

Dick, after pretending to drink, handed the flask back.

"Thanks," he said; "take another drink."

"All ri'; 'il do't, b' Jove!"

The fellow placed the flask to his lips and drank all the contents.

Then he threw the flask away.

He was drunk, but he knew when the flask was empty.

CHAPTER III.

THE TWO JIM SIMPSONS.

Dick now waited for the last drink to help in the work of rendering the redcoat practically helpless.

They had now traversed perhaps half the distance to New York City.

Dick decided that the time had come to act.

There was no use of fooling away any more time.

The redcoat was so drunk he would be unable to offer any resistance to Dick.

The youth suddenly caused his horse to move up close alongside that of his companion.

Dick reached out and caught the redcoat by the throat.

"Whoa!" he said, in a low voice.

Both horses came to a stop.

Dick quickly leaped to the ground and pulled the redcoat down after him.

The fellow was gasping and gurgling, and doing his best to utter cries.

To no avail.

Dick's grip was too strong.

It effectually silenced the redcoat.

Dick realized that the shock would probably sober the man—partially at least—and he decided that it would be best to choke the fellow into insensibility.

This would enable him to effect the change of clothing without trouble, and with the minimum of inconvenience.

Dick did not utter a word.

There was no need of doing so.

He did not care what the redcoat thought.

Dick took both hands and choked the fellow with such effect that he was speedily rendered unconscious.

A sort of gasping, gurgling groan told Dick when the work had been accomplished.

He did not lose any time.

He quickly divested the redcoat of his uniform.

Then Dick doffed his own clothing.

To don the uniform took but a few minutes.

As luck would have it, the uniform fitted Dick nicely.

The redcoat was about of the size and build of the youth.

Dick did not bother to dress the insensible man.

The weather was warm, and his underclothing would be sufficient protection.

Dick threw his old clothes down where the fellow would find them, however.

Then Dick mounted his horse and rode away in the direction of the city.

Dick rode at a swifter pace now.

The road was plainly defined and there was no danger of his losing his way.

Half an hour later Dick emerged from the old Bowery Lane and rode across the Common—now City Hall Park.

At that time the Common was at the extreme north end of the city.

Dick rode across and entered Broadway, and rode on in a southerly direction.

At the third street he turned to the left.

He went about half way down the block and paused in front of a livery stable.

He rode into the stable, and with the remark that he would like to leave the horse there a day or two, he left.

Dick made his way out upon the street.

Knowing that he would be more apt to learn something of interest where redcoats were thick, than where they were not, he made his way back to Broadway.

He started slowly down this great thoroughfare.

The street was thronged.

At least half the people on the street were redcoats.

There were so many that Dick felt perfectly safe.

He could not have had a better disguise.

He walked slowly along, pausing occasionally to listen to the conversation of a group of redcoats.

He picked up a number of pointers.

Dick was walking slowly along when suddenly a man in the dress of an orderly slapped him on the shoulder.

"You are wanted, Simpson," the orderly said.

Dick turned, in surprise.

He was about to deny that his name was Simpson.

Then a thought struck him.

Might not he be able to make use of this man's mistake?

Could he not use it to his advantage?

Dick wondered who Simpson could be.

There was no doubt, however, that he was a redcoat.

Dick thought to himself that he must resemble Simpson very much.

But did he resemble him sufficient to stand the test of close observation?

Dick feared not.

He decided to test the matter at once.

The point where he had been accosted was near a lamp-post.

Dick turned his face so that the light shone upon it. "Well, what is it?" asked Dick. "What is wanted?" "You are wanted."

Dick was watching the orderly closely.

The man was looking him in the face.

He had obtained a good view of it.

Yet no expression of surprise crossed the orderly's face.

Dick was satisfied that he must look enough like "Simpson" to pass for a twin brother.

Dick was a daring youth.

He was always ready to turn everything to his advantage.

He decided to turn this chance resemblance to his advantage.

He made up his mind to impersonate Simpson.

Come what might, he would do it.

He might learn something of great importance.

"Who wants me?" he asked.

"The commander-in-chief."

"General Clinton?"

"Of course; who else?"

"When does he want me?"

"Now."

"Now?"

"Yes; at once."

"Where does he want me?"

"At headquarters."

"Humph!" said Dick. "Are you going back there now?"

Dick had a reason for asking this question.

He did not know where General Clinton's headquarters were.

If the orderly had an errand elsewhere, Dick would not know what to do.

True, he could inquire the way to headquarters, but he feared he might betray himself in some manner before he reached General Clinton.

The orderly's reply set Dick's mind at rest, however.

"Yes, I'm going back there at once," he said. "Will you come along with me?"

"Yes."

The two set out immediately.

Dick was careful to let the orderly take the lead.

In this way he would not be in danger of betraying his lack of knowledge of the whereabouts of General Clinton's headquarters.

Had the commander-in-chief of the British been General Howe, who had only a short time before resigned and gone back to England, Dick would not have dared venture into the British headquarters.

General Howe knew Dick well by sight.

General Clinton, however, did not.

It would be safe to appear before him.

The headquarters were soon reached.

Dick found that they were in the same building that had been occupied by General Howe two years before, when he was commander-in-chief, with headquarters in New York City.

Dick had been in the city two or three times, at that time, doing spy work.

The orderly led the way into the building.

Dick followed, while seemingly keeping right alongside.

They threaded two or three hallways and presently the orderly paused in front of a door.

Throwing the door open he announced:

"Mr. Simpson, your excellency."

Dick stepped through the doorway.

The door went shut behind him.

Dick gave a quick glance around the room.

A man in the uniform of a British general sat at a table at one side.

Dick was confident the man was General Clinton.

He stepped forward and saluted.

"You sent for me, General Clinton?" he asked.

The commander-in-chief, for he it was, glanced at Dick in an absent-minded fashion, and said:

"Yes, Simpson."

Then he motioned toward a chair.

"Sit down," he ordered.

Dick obeyed.

He was glad to do so.

He would not attract so much attention to himself sitting, as when standing.

If there were any differences of appearance between himself and the real Simpson, they would not be so likely to be noticed.

General Clinton dipped a quill in some ink and wrote rapidly for a few moments.

Then he folded the paper and sealed it.

"Simpson," he said, "here is a document which I wish you to take aboard the ship, Duke of Marlborough. You know where it lies; you were on board it yesterday."

Dick was taken somewhat aback, yet he did not dare show that such was the case.

Of course, he had not been on board the ship.

He had no idea where it lay.

Of course, he did not dare say so, however.

To express ignorance of the whereabouts of the ship would be suicidal.

It would be the same as saying that he was not "Simpson."

It was no part of Dick's plan to get himself into trouble.

Having stumbled upon a stroke of good fortune, he was determined to make the most of it.

If he could get out of the room without it being discovered that he was not Simpson, it would be a good stroke of work, for he would have in his possession a message to the commander of one of the British warships in the harbor.

Dick arose and bowed.

"Yes, your excellency," he said. "Shall I go now?"

"At once; take the document and guard it carefully. It is important."

Dick took the paper and placed it carefully in his pocket.

"I'll do that, you may be sure," he thought. "I'll guard it carefully enough!"

Aloud he said:

"Yes, your excellency."

Then he started toward the door.

He had nearly reached it, when it came open.

"Lieutenant Thompson, your excellency," said the voice of the orderly.

A rather good-looking young British officer entered the room.

He and Dick came almost face to face.

Their eyes met for an instant.

Dick imagined that the lieutenant gave a slight start.

Dick himself felt somewhat puzzled.

"I have seen that young fellow's face before," he thought. "Strange that I can't remember where it was."

Dick passed through the open doorway and made his way along the hall.

The young officer who had been ushered into the room and announced as Lieutenant Thompson strode forward, quickly, and confronted General Clinton.

He saluted, quickly.

There was an excited look on his face.

"Your pardon, General Clinton," he said, "but, if you please, who is the young man who just left here?"

The commander-in-chief looked surprised.

"That was Private Simpson," he said.

"James Simpson?"

"Yes. Why do you ask?"

"I'll tell you, sir. I have just come from—ah—er—from a place over on Broadway, and when I left there there was a man there who is the living image of the fellow who just departed, and he called himself 'James Simp-

son.' Are there two Jim Simpsions, and do they look exactly alike?"

General Clinton leaped to his feet in excitement.

"What is that you say?" he cried. "Are there two Jim Simpsions, and do they both look exactly alike? Heavens, no! Do you really mean what you say, lieutenant, or have you been drinking more than is good for you?"

The young lieutenant flushed.

"I have not been drinking, your excellency," he said, with dignity. "I was never more in earnest in my life, and I have said what I have in the hope of doing you a kindness; if the man who was just in here claimed to be James Simpson, there are two of them, and they look exactly alike."

General Clinton saw that the young officer was in earnest.

He became excited.

"Zounds!" he cried. "One of those fellows is an impostor; the question is, which one? I have just given an important message to the one who just left here, and if it should happen that he is the impostor, and he should escape with the document, it would be bad, very bad; he must be stopped at once. Quick! come with me and lend me your assistance."

General Clinton rushed out of the room, closely followed by Lieutenant Thompson.

Meanwhile, Dick had made his way along the hallways.

In order to reach the street it was necessary to traverse several hallways.

At one point Dick made a mistake and turned in the wrong direction.

He soon discovered his mistake, however, and, hastening back, made his way in the right direction.

He soon reached the entrance.

There he met with a surprise.

It partook considerably of the nature of a shock, also.

Dick came face to face with a young man who looked enough like himself to be a twin brother.

"The real Simpson!" thought Dick. "Now I'm in for it."

"Great guns! Who are you?" burst from the redcoat's lips.

"It doesn't matter," said Dick, hurriedly, yet in a calm tone; "I am in a great hurry. Will talk with you later."

But the suspicions of the redcoat seemed to be aroused.

He placed himself squarely in front of Dick.

"There is no need of such great haste," he said; "this is a very strange affair, and I don't understand why it is that if I have a double in the ranks of the British army

"I haven't heard of it before; just wait a moment, I wish to have a little talk with you."

But Dick did not wish to wait.

"Out of my way!" he said, sternly. "I have important business to attend to and have no time to lose."

He advanced as he spoke.

The real "Simpson" stood his ground, however.

"I will not get out of the way," he said, firmly; "I am going to find out what this means."

"Some other time," said Dick. "Out of the way!"

Dick's tone was threatening.

"Who are you?" asked the redcoat.

"That is my affair;" grimly. "For the last time, out of the way!"

The real Simpson laughed, sarcastically.

"I take my orders from only my superiors in rank," he said. "When you have answered a few of my questions, I will get out of the way, but not before."

"You won't?"

"No."

"I think you will."

As Dick spoke, he leaped forward and seized his double. At the same instant there came the sound of hurrying footsteps.

General Clinton and Lieutenant Thompson appeared upon the scene.

They took in the situation at a glance.

They saw the two "Simpsons" struggling there at the entrance.

"Seize him! Seize them!" roared General Clinton. "Don't let them get away!"

CHAPTER IV.

ON BOARD THE BRITISH WARSHIP.

Dick realized that if he remained a few moments longer he would be captured.

Of course, both himself and the fellow he looked like would be made prisoners, but an investigation would be made, and it would undoubtedly be discovered which was the genuine "Simpson," and which the impostor.

Dick knew that this would be fatal.

He was determined that he would not be captured.

He had an important message in his possession.

He intended to keep it, if such a thing was possible.

As General Clinton and Lieutenant Thompson rushed toward the two who were struggling there in the entrance, Dick decided what to do.

He had secured a hold on his opponent that enabled him to execute the movement.

When General Clinton and Lieutenant Thompson were within a few feet of Dick, he suddenly hurled the real Simpson toward the two.

"Seize him!" he cried. "Seize the impostor! I am the real Simpson, and he is a fraud! I'll get help!"

Then Dick darted down the steps and started up the street.

He heard excited cries, and glanced back over his shoulder.

General Clinton was standing at the entrance, gesticulating and crying out excitedly.

A number of British soldiers were coming, running at their best speed.

"After him!" Dick heard the general say. "Capture that fellow, if possible! Twenty pounds to the man who first lays hands on him!"

"This is going to be a lively chase," thought Dick; "those redcoats will do their best to earn that money."

It was a fairly dark night, but there were street lamps, and this made it difficult for Dick to get out of sight of his pursuers.

When Dick rushed forth from General Clinton's headquarters he had turned to the left and was now running southward toward the battery.

He ran onward as rapidly as was possible.

Judging by the sound, quite a crowd was giving chase.

Dick had great confidence in himself, however.

He believed that he would be able to escape.

Suddenly he caught his toe against a projecting stone at a street crossing and fell headlong.

He leaped to his feet instantly, but found that he had wrenched his right leg.

He could still run, but not so swiftly.

The injured limb gave him considerable pain.

The brave youth gritted his teeth and ran onward, however.

He was as determined to escape as ever.

His speed was diminished to such an extent that his pursuers easily kept pace with him.

Indeed, by the time he had gone a couple of blocks, Dick saw that his pursuers were gaining on him.

"I don't like that very well," thought Dick. "I mustn't let those fellows overhaul me."

He continued running as rapidly as possible.

After him came the pursuing redcoats.

They drew nearer and nearer.

Dick limped considerably.

He could not help it, gritty as he was.

He had wrenched his leg pretty severely when he fell.

He began to realize that if he depended on fleetness of foot to enable him to escape, he would be captured.

He gritted his teeth and kept on, however.

Presently he emerged from the street and found himself in a park.

Dick recognized the place.

It was Bowling Green Park.

Knowing of nothing else better that he could do, Dick raced on across the park.

Behind him, and now quite close, came the pursuing redcoats.

Dick was soon across the little park.

He ran out upon a wharf.

Dick was desperate.

He had made up his mind that rather than submit to capture, he would leap into the water and take his chances in getting away by swimming.

At the point where he reached the edge of the wharf, a boat lay.

There were half a dozen men in the boat.

Four of the men sat at the oars, one sat in the bow holding a lantern and one sat at the stern.

Dick saw this by the light of the lantern.

The boat was in the act of moving away from the wharf.

Acting upon the impulse of the moment, Dick leaped down into the boat and seated himself beside the man at the stern.

"Hello! Who are you?" the man exclaimed.

"Pull, men! Quick!" cried Dick. "There is a gang after me and I want to get away from them. It will be my treat if you get me away from them."

"Who are they?" was the question asked by the man who sat beside Dick.

"Oh, it's a gang of my comrades."

"Your comrades, eh?"

"Yes."

"Why are they chasing you?"

"Oh, I got into a racket with one of them."

"You did, eh?"

"Yes; but pull, men, quick! They'll be here in a moment."

The men hesitated, then he pushed against the wharf and sent the boat out into the water.

At the same instant, Dick's pursuers reached the edge of the wharf.

"Stop!" roared one. "Stop that boat instantly. We want that fellow sitting beside you."

"Oh, you do?" growled Dick's seatmate.

"Yes."

"Then ye'd better come and git him."

"Stop the boat, I say!"

"Yes, stop it!"

"It won't be good for you if you don't."

"Back water!"

Such were a few of the commands given utterance to by the members of the party that had chased Dick.

Dick awaited the words and actions of the men in the boat with some anxiety.

He feared they would stop the boat and put him back on the wharf.

But the men had no intention of doing so.

"Back water, nothing!" Dick's seatmate growled. "You fellers ain't our bosses; we'll back water when we gits ready, and not before."

Dick drew a breath of relief.

He was safe, temporarily, at least.

The men kept on rowing.

The boat forged through the water rapidly.

The men on the wharf danced wildly about and yelled angrily.

"Let's get a boat and give chase!" one cried.

"Yes, yes, let's do!" from another.

"Let 'em!" growled the man beside Dick. "They can't catch us."

Dick was glad to hear the man say this.

"Where is this boat headed for?" he asked.

"Out ter our ship."

"Oh, you're British sailors, then?"

"Yas."

"Can't you make a circuit and put me ashore up the river a ways?"

"No; our time of leave is up. We've got ter go aboard ther ship."

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yas."

"Then how will I get ashore?"

"Mebby we kin git permission ter bring ye back."

"Oh, that would be all right."

It took only a few minutes to row out to the ship.

The boat was made fast alongside and the sailors made their way up the ladder to the ship's deck.

Dick followed, and, climbing the rope ladder, was soon on the deck of the ship.

An officer came forward.

"Well, you're back," he said.

Then his eyes fell upon Dick.

"Who is this?" he asked.

"It's er young feller what got inter our boat back at the wharf, sir," the British tar explained. "There was

er mob arter him an' we, seein' ez how he were a British soldier, brung him away."

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yas; an' if you please, sir, kin we take ther young feller back ter ther shore?"

The officer hesitated.

Before he came to a decision, the sound of oars was heard.

Then a grating sound as of a boat rubbing against the side of a ship.

"Ahoy, the ship!" cried a voice.

The officer stepped to the rail.

"Ahoy, the boat!" he cried. "Who are you, and what do you want?"

"We wish to come aboard."

"Who are you?"

"British soldiers."

"Why do you wish to come aboard?"

"Hasn't one of your boats just returned to the ship?" was the counter-question.

"Yes; what of it?"

"Didn't your sailors bring a young man aboard the ship with them?"

"Yes; what of it?"

"A good deal; we want him."

"You do?"

"Yes."

"What has he done?"

"'Tisn't so much what he has done as what he is."

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yes."

"Well, what is the young man?"

"He is a rebel."

"A rebel?"

"Yes, and a spy."

"A rebel and a spy, eh?"

"Yes."

"Can you substantiate your words?"

"I think so."

"But the young man in question wears a British uniform."

"That may be; he may have stolen it somewhere."

The British officer turned and looked at Dick, searchingly.

The youth met the man's gaze unflinchingly.

As may be supposed, Dick had listened to the conversation with interest.

He realized that he was in a tight place.

He knew that he was in great danger.

No one would have known this by looking at his face, however.

It was calm and serene.

"You have heard what that man said?" asked the officer, somewhat sternly.

Dick nodded.

"Yes, I heard," he replied.

"He says you are a rebel and a spy."

"And I say he is a liar!"

"You deny it, then?"

"I do."

"Humph! What would be his reason for falsely accusing you?"

"I could not say."

The officer eyed Dick for a few moments in silence.

Dick bore the scrutiny well.

"Well," came up from below, "are you going to let us have that rebel or not?"

The tone was impatient.

The officer hesitated.

"Where do you come from?" he asked.

"Straight from the headquarters of General Clinton, the commander-in-chief of the British army."

The officer suddenly made up his mind.

"You are accused of being a rebel and a spy," he said to Dick. "Whether or not you are one, I do not know; but I feel that I should not be doing right in refusing to let those men take you."

Dick had expected this.

He had a plan of action outlined in his mind.

"Before delivering me up to them, had you not better have some of them come aboard, sir?" asked Dick.

His tone was respectful.

"Why should I do that?"

"To see whether or not they really are British soldiers. They may be rebels themselves."

Dick was so cool and calm and so gentlemanly that the British officer was impressed in his favor.

"I judge that would only be fair," he said.

Then he stepped to the rail.

"I am going to let you have this young man," he called out; "but you will have to come aboard and get him yourselves."

"All right; that is satisfactory," came the reply. "We'll come aboard at once."

Dick realized the time had come for action.

If he was to escape being made a prisoner he would have to do something at once.

He was a youth prompt to decide and prompt to act.

He did not hesitate an instant.

He ran across the deck of the ship to the opposite from that on which was the boat containing his enemies, and leaped headlong over the rail.

CHAPTER V.

OVERBOARD!

Dick shot downward toward the water.

Splash!

He struck the water and went under.

Dick was a youth who always kept his eyes open.

There was little that escaped his observation at any time.

He had taken note of the fact that there was a small rowboat at the stern of the ship when the boat he had come aboard in was approaching the vessel.

Dick had made up his mind to utilize this boat, if possible.

He swam toward the stern.

He was a splendid swimmer.

The fact that he had his clothes on did not bother him.

He was such a good swimmer that he could have kept himself afloat for hours, even though thus handicapped.

But he had no wish to try to swim ashore.

It would have been too hard a task, and then the boat would probably have overtaken him.

If he could reach the boat and get a fair start, he believed he could get away from his enemies easily.

It was dark enough so he could not be seen at a greater distance than three or four yards.

When Dick came to the surface he heard the sound of hurrying footsteps on the deck and of excited voices.

He swam along as rapidly as possible.

He made scarcely any noise at all.

It took him but a very few moments to reach the stern of the ship.

The boat was there.

A lantern hanging at the stern of the warship threw down sufficient light so that Dick could see what he was doing.

He climbed into the boat as quickly as possible.

A glance showed him that the oars were in the bottom of the boat.

Dick seized the oars and placed them in the rowlocks.

Then he stepped to the bow of the boat and cut the painter.

Seating himself, he seized the oars.

Just as he did so he heard a noise above his head.

He looked up and saw the British officer leaning over the rail.

"Stop!" the officer cried. "Don't attempt to go away with that boat. If you do you are a dead man!"

He drew a pistol as he spoke and levelled it at Dick.

Dick's answer was to dip the oars into the water and give a strong pull.

The youth was wonderfully strong in the arms, and an expert with the oars.

The boat fairly leaped forward.

Crack!

The officer had fired.

Dick's sudden movement had disconcerted the officer, however.

It had taken him somewhat by surprise, and he had fired quickly, without taking aim.

The result was that he missed Dick.

The bullet whistled past Dick's head and buried itself in the bottom of the boat.

With an oath the officer hurled the pistol down at Dick.

The pistol came almost as close as the bullet had done.

The officer had damaged himself more than he had Dick, however, for he had lost a good weapon.

Before he could draw another pistol, Dick had got outside the range of light thrown down by the lantern, and had disappeared in the darkness.

"Stop!" the officer roared again, but he might as well have saved his breath.

Dick had no intention of stopping.

He rowed onward as rapidly as possible.

He realized that he would soon be pursued.

He wished to get as good a start as possible.

He heard the sound of excited voices on the deck of the ship and around at the side.

"They'll be after me now," he thought. "Ah, there they come now!"

A boat shot through the circle of light thrown down by the lantern at the stern of the ship.

The boat was coming in Dick's direction.

Dick turned his boat's head slightly, somewhat, and rowed in a direction diagonally away from the one he had been going.

He kept turning the head of the boat more and more, and presently was heading in toward the shore.

He could see the lights of the city, and pulled toward them.

He paused a couple of times and listened.

The first time he could hear voices and the sound of oars in the rowlocks, but the next time he heard nothing.

"I guess I've given them the slip," Dick thought.

This gave Dick a feeling of satisfaction.

He had had some exciting adventures and had been in considerable danger, but he felt safe now.

He rode onward as rapidly as possible.

He shaped his course by a couple of lights on the shore. Nearer and nearer they drew.

A few minutes later Dick reached the shore.

There was no wharf at this point.

Here and there were posts driven into the sandy beach, however, and Dick pulled the boat up on the sand and tied the painter to one of the posts.

He looked down at himself somewhat ruefully, by the light of a street lamp standing a short distance away.

He was soaking wet.

"My splendid uniform is ruined!" he murmured, with a little laugh. "Well, I guess I haven't anything to complain of. I have done first-rate. I have secured a valuable document, and have escaped from the redcoats. No, I haven't anything to complain of."

Dick reached his hand into the pocket where he had placed the valuable paper.

A startled cry escaped him.

"Great guns!" he exclaimed, "the paper is gone. I have lost it!"

Then Dick felt in his other pockets.

He thought it possible he might have made a mistake in the pocket, after all.

But he had not.

The paper which General Clinton had given him was gone.

But how had it gone, and when and where?

Dick asked himself these questions.

He could not answer them, however.

All he knew was that the paper had disappeared.

He thought it possible that the paper had come out of his pocket when he leaped overboard from the warship.

In that case the paper was gone forever.

Dick did not think it possible that he would ever again see the paper, anyway.

He was badly disappointed.

He had expected to be able to take the document to General Washington, and that it would prove to contain valuable information.

Now he would have to content himself with finding out all he could in other ways.

Dick did not lose much time mourning over the loss of the paper.

That was not his way.

"Well, it's gone," he murmured; "it can't be helped,

so I'll make the best of it and will go ahead, the same as I originally intended to do."

Dick made his way up from the beach.

He was soon threading the streets.

Suddenly, on turning a corner, he came face to face with four redcoats who had been drinking more than was good for them.

They noticed that Dick's clothes were soaking wet.

"Hello, comrade!" cried one. "Been bathing with your uniform on, hey? Well, you'll catch it!"

"You'll find that to be a pretty expensive bathing suit!" from another.

"That needn't bother you fellows any," replied Dick, quietly. "You won't have to pay the bill."

"He's saucy, isn't he!" cried one.

"Too much so, altogether!" growled another.

"Let's take him down a peg or two!"

"I'm for doing it!"

The four were just drunk enough to be quarrelsome.

It did not matter to them that Dick wore a British uniform.

They were in a mood to quarrel with any one.

They would have quarreled with their best friend.

Dick was in no mood to be trifled with.

He hated the redcoats on general principles.

Then, a lot of them had just caused him considerable trouble.

When he saw that the four were bent on attacking him, he did not seem to be at all disconcerted.

He simply gave them warning.

"You will do well to attend to your own business and let me alone!" he said, quietly, but sternly. "If you attack me, some of you fellows will get hurt!"

This only angered the redcoats the more, and made them more determined.

"Go for him, fellows!" cried one. "Knock him down! Give him a good thrashing for his insolence."

The four rushed to the attack.

They were drunk enough so that they did not have full control of themselves; Dick was sober.

Then, too, Dick was one of the best all-around athletes of that time.

Everything considered, the combat which was now started was not so unequal as it seemed.

In an instant the fight was under way.

Almost as quickly as one could count, two of the redcoats went down.

Dick had dealt two blows, and both had landed.

Biff! Crack!

Down went the other two.

THE LIBERTY BOYS ARE AT WORK.

The first two who had been downed now struggled to their feet.

The blows and the jar of the fall had sobered them.

They were wildly angry.

They came up, cursing like pirates.

They were threatening what they would do.

That they would do their worst there was no doubt.

Dick was not alarmed, however.

He met them half way.

It took more than the two blows to down the fellows, however.

He was forced to strike several blows.

He downed the two, however.

By this time the other two had struggled to their feet.

They, too, were sobered by the shock of the blow and jar of the fall.

Like their comrades they were more angry and determined than before.

Dick managed to knock both of them down.

The other two were now on their feet.

They were as angry as ever, but slightly groggy.

They attacked Dick again, but he had little difficulty in disposing of them.

Two well-directed blows were all that was necessary.

They went down with a crash.

This time they lay still.

They had been knocked senseless.

The other two scrambled to their feet, but seeing the fate which had befallen their comrade, they turned and made off up the street.

"Go it, you cowards!" murmured Dick.

Then he walked coolly and unconcernedly away.

Dick did not feel very comfortable.

His wet clothing stuck tight to him.

He was glad that it was night-time, as he attracted but little attention.

Dick had walked quite a ways when suddenly an exclamation escaped him.

"Jove!" he said, "why didn't I think of it sooner? The chances are that I lost that paper at the place where I stumbled and fell when the redcoats were chasing me."

Dick decided to go and look for the lost paper."

He scarcely expected to find it.

Even if he had dropped it there it was likely that some one had picked it up ere this.

Still it would do no harm to look.

Dick walked as rapidly as he could.

His leg still pained him and made it impossible for him to get along as rapidly as he otherwise could have done.

Dick was not very well acquainted with this portion of the city.

He had not gone far before he awoke to the realization of the fact that he was lost.

He paused and looked about him.

Neither the street nor the buildings looked familiar.

It would do no good to stand still, however.

Realizing this, Dick started on.

He made his way along, turning up one street and down another at random, for perhaps fifteen minutes.

Then he paused and looked around him again.

"Things look somewhat familiar around here," he thought. "I believe I've been here before."

Again he looked around him.

Suddenly the streets seemed to whirl around like some big wheel, and what had seemed south to him a moment before, now seemed to be north.

Instantly Dick knew where he was.

"Yonder is General Clinton's headquarters," he said to himself. "I can find the place where I stumbled and fell, in a few minutes now."

Dick struck out down the street.

"That's the place, yonder," thought Dick, a few minutes later. "I was just about at the centre of that cross street when I fell."

Dick reached the street and started across it.

As he did so, a man started to cross from the opposite side.

The man suddenly uttered an exclamation.

He paused, and stooping down, picked something out of the gutter.

There was a street lamp at the corner, and by its light Dick saw what it was that the man had picked up.

He recognized it at a glance.

It was the lost paper!

CHAPTER VI.

THE LOST PAPER CAUSES TROUBLE.

Dick stepped forward and confronted the man.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, "but that paper is mine."

The man, who was a large, rough-looking fellow, with the appearance of a tough, leered.

He tucked the paper into an inside pocket.

"Wot papper?" he asked.

"The one you just picked up and which you put in your pocket just now."

"I never picked up no papper."

Such bare-faced lying was new to Dick.

"But I saw you pick it up!" he said.

He forced himself to speak calmly.

"Ye mus' be mistook, young feller."

Dick frowned.

"No, I am not mistaken," he said. "I saw you pick up a paper and put it in your pocket."

"No, ye didn't see nothin' uv ther kin', young feller; but jes' supposin' ye hed seen me do thet, wot bizness would et be uv yourn?"

"Such talk as that wearies me," said Dick; "you picked up a paper and put it in your pocket just now. That paper belongs to me, and I want it!"

The man leered.

"Oh, ye do?" he asked.

"Yes, I do."

"By wot rights d'ye lay claim ter ther papper, young feller?"

"The right of ownership."

"Ther right uv ownership, hey?"

"Yes; the paper belongs to me."

"Et does, hey?"

"Yes."

"How d'ye make thet out? Et wuz layin' heer in ther gutter."

"Where I dropped it."

"Oh, ye dropped et theer, did ye?"

"Yes."

"Humph! On purpuss, I s'pose?"

"No, not on purpose."

"By accident, hey?"

"Yes, by accident."

"Humph! When did ye drop et?"

"An hour ago."

"A hour ergo?"

"Yes."

"Thet's funny."

"What is funny?"

"W'y, thet ye sh'd hev dropped thet paper in ther gutter a hour ergo, an' then left et lay theer a hour afore comin' back ter git et. W'y didn't ye pick et up ter onct?"

"There was a good reason why I did not do so."

"Theer mus' hev be'n, you feller; an' I guess thet ther bes' reezon is thet ye didn't drop no papper."

"But I say I did!"

Dick was becoming angry now.

He realized that he had a tough customer to deal with.

He saw that he was going to have hard work getting the paper away from the fellow.

"Oh, yer say yer did, hey?" the fellow growled. "Yer still stick ter yer story, do yer?"

"I certainly do; that paper is mine, and I want it."

The man grinned in an aggravating fashion.

"Yer'll hev ter excuse me, young feller, but I don't berleeve I kin swaller thet story uv yourn; ye can't make me berleeve thet yer'd drop er papper an' know et an' go on without stoppin' ter pick et up."

"Under certain circumstances a man might do such a thing," said Dick.

"I can't un'erstan' wot ther sarkumstances c'u'd be."

"Well, suppose a man was being chased by a gang of fellows; he wouldn't be likely to stop, would he?"

"Humph! an' wuz ye chased?"

"I was."

"An' ye claim ye dropped this papper?"

"I do; I did drop it."

"An' it's yourn?"

"It is; give it to me, please."

The man laughed.

"I c'u'dn't think uv doin' thet," he said.

"But it's my paper."

The fellow laughed again.

"No, et's mine," he said. "I've got persession uv et, yer know."

Dick saw that the man had no intention of giving him the paper; he realized that if he got it he would have to take it by force.

This might prove to be a difficult task.

The man was a big fellow and evidently strong.

Then, too, Dick had a lame leg.

This would handicap him considerably in an encounter.

Dick was determined to have the paper, however.

It was an important document.

He must get possession of it.

"Will you give the paper up?" asked Dick, sternly.

"Not by er jugful!" was the prompt reply. "Ye bet I won't give ther papper up."

"You had better."

The man snorted in a contemptuous manner.

"Bah! young feller, ye needn't try ter skeer me. I don't skeer, I don't—no, not worth er cent!"

"I have no wish to scare you," replied Dick, quietly, "but I am going to have that paper, even if I have to take it away from you by force!"

The man laughed in a loud voice now.

This seemed to amuse him immensely.

"Say, thet's ther bes' joke yit!" he gurgled. "Ther idee uv er leetle whipper-snapper like ye er talkin' uv

takin' ennythin' erway frum Hank Muggins by force!
Thet's er good joke, by jucks, ef et hain't!"

Then the man roared.

Dick looked around him.

He feared the loud laughter of the man would attract some one to the spot.

This he did not want.

Any newcomers might be friends of the man.

Dick preferred to have it out with the fellow alone.

Suddenly the fellow stopped laughing.

"Wot is this papper, ennyhow?" he asked.

"It is a document of value to me," said Dick; "it is worth nothing to you."

The fellow leered.

"Oh, I dunno erbout thet," he said; "ef et's valerable ter you, et is proberly worth sumthin' ter me."

"No, it is worthless to you."

The man looked at Dick, shrewdly.

"Jedging by yer uniform," he said, "ye must be er British sojer."

Dick nodded.

"Yes, I am a British soldier."

The man nodded.

"I think I unnerstan'," he said; "this papper is proberly er important dockyment which ye wuz takin' some-whur an' which ye lost. Waal, I foun' et an' I'm ergoin' ter hev sumthin' out uv et."

"How are you going to manage it?" asked Dick.

"I'm ergoin' ter take this papper ter Gineral Clinton; I ruther think he'll pay me sumthin' fur bringin' et ter 'im."

"Oh, you do?"

"Yas."

Dick saw that the man meant what he said.

Had Dick had some money he would have tried to bribe the fellow to let him have the paper, but he had no money.

There was only one way for him to get possession of the document.

That was by taking it by force.

Dick realized that this would be a difficult task.

The realization had no deterring effect, however.

The youth was determined to regain possession of the paper if such a thing were possible.

Having decided to make the attempt to regain the paper by force, Dick was prompt to act.

He understood the value of taking an opponent by surprise.

It was a big advantage.

Measuring the distance carefully with his eyes, Dick suddenly leaped forward.

Out shot his right arm.

The youth's fist caught the man fair between the eyes.
Crack!

It was a terrible blow.

Dick had struck with all his force.

He realized that the man was a tough customer.

It would take a hard blow to hurt him.

He was not expecting such sudden action on Dick's part.

He was taken by surprise.

Not being braced to withstand the shock, he went down.

Kerihump!

He struck the hard street with considerable force.

A less tough individual would have been knocked senseless.

Not so Hank Muggins.

He was jarred considerably, but was not even dazed.

He started to rise, almost as soon as he had struck.

Dick leaped forward and threw himself upon the man, however, and forced him back.

"Not so fast!" the youth cried. "You shall not get up till after you have given up that paper!"

Dick made the attempt to get the fellow by the throat.

This was the youth's favorite hold.

If he could get a throat hold he usually ended a struggle very quickly, and always in his own favor.

But Hank Muggins managed to keep Dick from securing the hold.

Perhaps he had had the hold tried on him at some prior time.

He acted as if he knew the danger of allowing it to be secured.

He began struggling fiercely.

He was very strong.

He seized Dick in a bear-like hug and tried to turn the youth.

Had he been able to turn Dick over and get on top, he would no doubt have been able to overcome the youth.

Dick was too well versed in the wrestler's art to allow this, however.

He knew how to prevent it.

Strong as the man was, Dick had no great difficulty in holding him down.

What Dick wished to do was to hold him there, and then manage in some way to get the paper out of his pocket.

He thought he might be able to do so, after a time.

He worked in such a way as to worry the man and tire him.

Dick was an adept at this sort of work.

He realized that he was doing this.

One thing: The man was not accustomed to violent work, and he could not stand so much of it as could Dick.

Try as he would, however, Dick could not get the man into such a position as would permit him to get his hand into the fellow's pocket.

It was all the youth could do to hold the man down with both hands.

Dick hardly knew how the affair would end.

He kept steadily at the work of tiring Mr. Muggins, however.

If he could exhaust the man's strength sufficiently he might be able to get the paper away from him.

Hank Muggins was very angry.

He struggled and kicked, fiercely, and attempted to strike.

At the same time he kept up a constant flow of threats and curses.

He told Dick what he would do with him if he got the chance.

Some of his threats were bloodcurdling.

But they did not worry Dick.

He merely laughed at Muggins.

"You had better save your breath," he advised; "you will need it all before you get through with this business."

A hoarse growl was the man's only reply.

Doubtless he appreciated the value of Dick's advice, however.

At any rate, he did not curse and threaten as much as he had been doing.

He did not stop altogether, but reduced it to a minimum, as it were.

"That is better," said Dick, drily. "I would rather have you make a stronger defense than to be forced to listen to your oaths."

Muggins growled again.

He was very angry.

He realized that in this youth he had met his match.

The knowledge was anything but pleasing.

He began to fear that the youth would be able to take the paper away from him, after all.

Doubtless Dick would have been able to do so, but for an interruption.

Two men came shambling down the street.

They were rather tough-looking customers—something after the fashion of Mr. Muggins, in fact.

They saw Dick and Muggins struggling on the ground.

As the two fellows drew near, Muggins caught sight of them.

Evidently he recognized them.

A look of savage joy appeared on his face.

"Joe! Bill!" he cried. "Quick, help me! Knock this young cuss silly!"

Dick had thought that he heard footsteps, but had not been sure.

Now, however, he knew that some one was close at hand and that the newcomers were Muggins' friends.

Dick turned his head to see how close the fellows were.

As he did so, crack! something struck him alongside the head.

The blow was a severe one.

It knocked Dick off Mr. Muggins and stretched him senseless in the street.

CHAPTER VII.

DICK RECOVERS THE PAPER AND SETTLES THE SCORE.

When Dick regained consciousness he opened his eyes and looked around him.

He was lying where he had fallen—in the middle of the street.

The worthy Muggins and his two comrades, "Joe" and "Bill," had disappeared.

They had, as a matter of fact, searched the pockets of the youth and had taken everything of value that they found.

This, fortunately, was not much.

Having done this they had fled.

They supposed Dick was a British soldier, and feared that some of his comrades might come along and wreak vengeance on them.

Muggins kept the paper.

He did not say anything to his comrades about the paper.

If there was anything to be made, he wished to make it all himself.

Dick put his hand to his head.

It felt as large as two ordinary heads.

The scoundrel who went by the name of Bill had struck Dick with the big end of a heavy club-like cane.

Dick's head and the side of his face were swollen.

Dick rose to his feet.

He was dizzy and at first had hard work standing up.

Gradually his head got steadier, however.

He began to feel more like himself.

"Jove!" thought Dick, "I've had considerable good luck to-night, but have had more bad luck than usually falls to my lot. A crippled leg and a sore head is a little more than I've been used to.

Dick was a philosophical youth, however.

He knew that there was no use of worrying.

He was sorry to have lost the valuable paper, but grieving over it would not bring the paper back.

Dick decided that he could do nothing more that night.

He made up his mind to go to a quiet tavern, hire a room and go to bed.

He did so.

He was up bright and early next morning.

The side of Dick's face was black and blue, but the swelling had gone down considerable.

His jaw was so sore that he could hardly chew, but he managed to eat a fairly good breakfast.

Then he went out upon the street.

Dick's uniform had dried during the night, but had shrunk considerable and was rather a tight fit.

The legs of the pants were too short, as were also the sleeves of the coat.

This made Dick look rather comical and attracted considerable attention to him.

Some of the redcoats chaffed Dick.

Dick did not like it very well, but he did not wish to get into trouble, so he laughed it off.

He circulated around pretty freely.

He kept a wary eye out, however.

He was afraid that some one who knew of the "Simpson" episode of the day before might see him and recognize him as being one of the "Simpsons."

There was not a great deal of danger of this, however.

One whole side of his face was black and blue.

This changed his looks sufficiently so that it would have been difficult for any one to have identified him as being one of the "Simpsons."

Dick picked up numerous items of news.

The biggest item of news came to Dick along toward evening.

He was walking along the street when he came upon a group of redcoats.

They were talking excitedly.

Dick listened to their conversation eagerly.

He learned that a fleet of eighteen warships had that day appeared off Sandy Hook.

It was a French fleet, so the redcoats said.

The French alliance was then in force, and there was no doubt that the French fleet was there for the purpose of rendering aid to the Americans.

As the British fleet in New York Harbor consisted of

less than half the number of ships in the French fleet, the matter had a serious look.

It would seem as if it would be an easy thing for the French fleet to sail into the harbor and either sink or capture the British ships.

Then, acting in conjunction with the patriot army under General Washington, it would be an easy matter to take New York away from the British.

Such was the gist of the conversation of the excited redcoats.

Dick took it all in.

This was information, indeed.

It was welcome news.

"General Washington must know of this at once," thought Dick; "I will wait till dark and will then strike out for White Plains."

Dick was afraid he would attract too much attention to himself if he started while it was yet light.

It was now almost sundown, so he would not have to wait very long.

Dick made his way to a tavern, and, entering the dining-room, ate supper.

By the time he was through it was dark.

The front room of the tavern was a barroom.

As he emerged from the dining-room into the barroom, his eyes fell upon three men standing at the bar.

They were rough-looking characters and in one of them, the largest of the trio, Dick recognized his opponent of the night before, Mr. Hank Muggins.

The other two were, Dick doubted not, the "Joe" and "Bill" who had come to the assistance of Muggins.

One of the fellows carried a heavy bludgeon-like cane.

This fellow, Dick was confident, was the one who had dealt him the blow that had knocked him senseless.

"And that's the very stick he did it with, I'll warrant," thought Dick.

Dick was not, as a rule, vicious or vindictive.

He was not one who was never satisfied unless he had revenge.

Somehow, however, the sight of the trio angered him.

In the first place, he had wanted the paper which Muggins had caused him to lose, through refusing to give it up, and in the second place, he had a very sore head, where the bludgeon had struck him.

Dick made up his mind to get partially even, at least.

He wondered if Muggins still had the paper in his pocket.

If so, and Dick could secure it, it would be a victory over the scoundrel and would be a satisfaction to the youth.

Dick decided to find out.

The three were drinking, and did not notice the youth as he approached.

The first intimation either of them had that an enemy was at hand was when Dick dexterously jerked the stick out of "Bill's" hand.

"Heer! wot duz thet meen?" the fellow cried, setting his glass down, with a crash, and whirling around so as to face Dick.

"You gave me a thump with this stick last night," said the youth, grimly; "now I'm going to give you a dose of the same medicine."

Crack! Thump!

Dick hit the fellow a strong blow alongside the head, and knocked him down.

The stricken man set up a great howl and rolled and kicked at a terrible rate.

Crack! Thump!

Down went "Joe."

He, too, set up a terrible howl.

"Now for you, you big scoundrel!" cried Dick.

Crack! Thump!

Down went Mr. Muggins, with a crash that almost shook the building.

No sooner had the last-named of the trio struck the floor, than Dick was upon him.

Dick plunged his hand into the fellow's inside pocket.

There was a paper in the pocket.

Dick's fingers closed upon it.

Dick drew the paper forth.

It was the document which had been given to Dick by General Clinton, and which he had lost when fleeing from the pursuing redcoats the night before.

"Good!" thought Dick, "I have the paper again, and I have evened up my score with those scoundrels, too. Now to get away from here."

There were perhaps a dozen men in the barroom.

They were seated at small tables scattered about.

Dick had laid the three fellows out so quickly that the inmates of the barroom had not had time to interfere even had they the inclination.

All they could do was to utter long-drawn-out "Ah-h-h-h-hs!" and stare in open-mouthed amazement.

The barkeeper was rendered almost speechless by the action of the youth.

He stood as one paralyzed.

When Dick suddenly bolted for the door, however, the barkeeper suddenly awoke to what was going on.

"Hold on, there!" he cried. "What do you mean, any-way?"

He made a motion as if to come out from behind the bar.

Dick paid no attention to him.

Reaching the door he opened it and leaped out upon the street.

Dick did not think the inmates of the barroom would give chase to him.

The three men who had been knocked down were nothing to them.

True, the three would, no doubt, have given chase had they been in a condition to do so, but they were not.

By the time they would regain consciousness Dick could be clear away.

He made his way as rapidly as possible in the direction of the livery stable where he had left his horse.

He paid the score, mounted his horse and rode away.

He rode northward to the Common, crossed it and struck up the Old Bowery Lane.

He continued on till he was in the vicinity of the Harlem River.

Dick was careful now.

He knew he was in danger of being challenged at any moment.

He rode slowly.

To the youth's surprise, however, and much to his satisfaction he reached the bridge and crossed it without having been challenged.

He had got past the pickets in some manner.

As soon as he was across the river, Dick urged his horse forward at a gallop.

He was in a hurry to get back to the patriot encampment at White Plains.

The distance was about eighteen miles.

Dick thought he could cover it in two hours and a half.

He did so, easily.

It happened that the commander-in-chief had not yet gone to bed.

Dick went to headquarters, to make his report, at once.

He felt that General Washington ought to know about the arrival of the French fleet at the earliest possible moment.

The commander-in-chief greeted Dick pleasantly.

There was an eager light in his eyes.

"Well, Dick, back again?" he remarked. "And what is the news?"

"There is a French fleet lying off Sandy Hook, your excellency!" said Dick.

General Washington started.

His face lighted up.

"Say you so, Dick, my boy?" he exclaimed. "Did you see the fleet yourself?"

Dick shook his head.

"No, I did not see it, but I heard the British soldiers in New York talking about it. As I was dressed in a British uniform, and they thought me one of themselves, there is no reason to suppose that they were trying to fool me. I heard a number talking of it."

"It must be true, then. What else did you learn, Dick? Did you find out how many men General Clinton has in New York?"

"Yes; at least, I think so."

Then Dick told him what he had heard.

After he had placed the commander-in-chief in possession of all the information which he had gained by listening to the talk of the redcoats, Dick drew the paper from his pocket—the paper that had been given him by General Clinton, and which had caused him so much trouble, and which he had lost and regained.

"Here is a document which was given me to take aboard one of the British ships in the harbor, your excellency," said Dick; and then he told the commander-in-chief the history of the paper, in brief language.

General Washington took the paper, and, opening it, read it from beginning to ending.

"This is of considerable importance," he said; "you did well to secure this paper and bring it to me, Dick."

"I am glad of that, sir," was the youth's quiet reply.

CHAPTER VIII.

BACK TO NEW YORK.

Next morning, the commander-in-chief sent for Dick.

"I wish to send you back to New York," he said. "Are you ready to make the trip?"

"I am," was Dick's decided reply.

"I wish you to do even more," continued General Washington. "I wish you to go aboard one of the vessels of the French fleet and take a message to the commander of the fleet."

Dick's eyes sparkled.

"I will do it, if possible, sir," he said.

"Good! I suppose you will wait till nightfall to enter the city?"

"Yes, your excellency; it will be safest."

The commander-in-chief gave Dick a folded paper, which he told the youth to guard carefully.

"Rather than let it fall into the hands of the British, destroy it," he said.

"I will do so, sir."

General Washington gave Dick full instructions regarding the work which he wished him to do, and when he had ended, the youth took his departure.

He made his way to where the "Liberty Boys" were stationed.

He had not had time to talk to the boys much, as yet, since his return from New York.

Bob began plying him with questions, at once.

He wished to know regarding all the adventures through which Dick had passed.

Dick told the story, in his quiet, modest way, but the youths could read between the lines, and they knew that their captain had been in considerable danger.

"I'm going back to New York to-night, boys," Dick said, presently.

"Back to New York!"

"And to-night?"

"Great guns! What for?"

"You'll be shot or hung!"

"Let me go along, Dick!" this from Bob.

The youths were surprised that Dick should return again so soon.

They feared he would get into trouble, too.

They did not say much, however.

They realized that it was a great honor for Dick to be chosen for the important work of taking the message to the commander of the French fleet.

They were proud of their captain.

"Well, Dick'll deliver the message, if anybody can do it!" declared Mark Morrison, and the others acquiesced in this view of the case.

The day soon passed.

Dick made such preparations for his journey as he thought necessary.

When evening came he was ready to start.

Bob had insisted on accompanying him, but Dick had been forced to refuse his friend the privilege.

"I think I had better go alone, Bob," he said; "I would like to have you along, but fear it might not be best."

So he mounted his horse and rode away.

Dick had been over the road so recently that he had no trouble in finding his way.

Two hours and a half from the time he left White Plains, Dick was riding across the bridge over the Harlem River.

Dick knew it would be a difficult matter to get past the pickets.

He had been unable to do so the other time he entered the city.

He was confident it would be useless to slip past the pickets.

He decided upon a bold stroke.

He made up his mind that he would urge his horse forward at full speed and get past the pickets in this way.

It was a daring and dangerous plan, but this did not matter.

Dick was used to daring work.

All the "Liberty Boys" were, in fact.

They never hesitated an instant in risking their lives for Liberty's cause.

As he rode off the bridge, Dick urged his horse into a gallop.

Then he urged it into a run.

He was on the watch for an interruption.

He expected to hear a challenge or the sharp crack of muskets at any moment.

He was not disappointed.

Suddenly a sharp voice cried:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

Then almost immediately afterward there came the sharp reports of musket shots.

Bullets whistled past Dick's head.

One struck his hat and almost knocked it off his head.

Dick did not stop, however.

Instead, he leaned forward upon the neck of his horse and urged the animal onward.

Crack! crack! crack!

More bullets flew past Dick.

These were the last, however.

Dick was out of range before more shots could be fired.

"That was close work!" the youth said to himself.

"Some of those bullets came unpleasantly near. However, a miss is as good as a mile."

Dick slackened the speed of his horse down to an ordinary gallop.

An hour and a quarter later he rode out upon the Common, at the north side of the city of New York.

Dick rode across the Common and down Broadway a block or two.

Then he turned down a side street.

He paused at the same livery stable he had left the horse in when he was there before, and leaving the animal, made his way on down the street.

Dick was determined to go out and board the French vessel this very night, if possible.

He made his way down the street.

He was on Broadway.

He continued on down toward Bowling Green.

When he reached there he crossed the little park and made his way to the water front.

He wished to find some kind of a boat—one that would be seaworthy enough so that he could venture out through the Narrows, and to Sandy Hook.

He thought that he might find such a boat.

There were many fishing smacks along the river front, especially on the East River side.

Dick bore around in this direction.

Presently he came to a place where a sloop lay.

There was a lantern hanging at the bow of the sloop, and a man was pacing the deck.

Dick paused and looked at the man.

He hesitated a few moments, and then leaped lightly aboard the sloop.

The man looked at Dick as he approached.

"Waal," he said, "what do ye want?"

"I'd like to talk with you."

"Go ahead."

Dick looked at the man, searchingly.

Somehow he was favorably impressed with the man's appearance.

"All right; I'd like to ask you a question."

"Ax et."

"It is rather a leading question. You might resent it as being none of my business."

"Oh, go ahead; ef I don't want answer et, I won't."

"All right. What I wish to ask you is this: What are you, patriot or Tory?"

The old fisherman—for such he evidently was—gave Dick a shrewd, somewhat quizzical look.

"D'ye think I'd compromise myself by answering thet question, an' ye a-wearin' uv a British uniform?" he asked.

Dick started.

An eager look appeared in his eyes.

The old fisherman had unintentionally the same as told Dick that he was a patriot.

If he would "compromise" himself by answering the question to one whom he supposed to be a redcoat, he must be a patriot.

"Good!" said Dick; "you have already answered my question. You are a patriot."

The old man stared up at Dick for a few moments in silence.

There was a startled look on his face.

Presently this disappeared and a dogged look took its place.

"Waal, an' ef I am, what air ye goin' ter do about et?" he growled.

"This," said Dick: "I am going to make you an offer."

"An offer?"

"Yes."

"What ter do?"

"I wish to hire your boat and you to sail it."

"Ye wants ter hire my boat?"

"Yes."

"Whar do ye wantter go?"

"To Sandy Hook."

"Ter Sandy Hook?"

"Yes."

"What do ye wantter go out thar fur?"

Dick looked around him to see that no one was within hearing distance.

Then lowering his voice he said:

"I'll tell you what I want to go out there for. I wish to board one of the ships of the French fleet lying off Sandy Hook."

The old man looked at Dick in a searching manner.

"I likes ther looks uv yer face, young feller," he said, pleasantly; "et looks good an' honest. But hev yer furgot thet ye air wearin' er British uniform?"

Dick shook his head.

"No, I haven't forgotten it," he replied.

"Waal, ye'd better remember et afore ye decide to go aboard one uv them French ships; et'll be apt ter predjudooce 'em erg'inst ye; ther French don't like ther British, ye know."

"I know that and I'm glad of it. This uniform is all right, I am merely wearing it as a disguise; it will be all right. Now, what will you charge to take me out to Sandy Hook?"

The old fisherman hesitated.

"I don't beleeve I kin do et ertall," he said, presently.

"Why not?"

"Because ther British hev three er four sloops uv war out at ther Narrers an' I don't think we kin git past 'em."

"Well, if you can't, it won't be your fault; what will you charge me to try?"

"I run ther risk uv losin' my boat an' mebbby my life," he said, "but I'm willin' ter take sum risk ter aid ther cause; an' fur five pounds in gold I'll make ther attempt ter take ye out ter Sandy Hook."

"Done!" cried Dick. "I'll pay you the money in advance, so that if anything should happen to me or that we should be parted suddenly you will have your money."

Dick drew some gold pieces from his pocket, and, counting out five, handed them to the fisherman.

"Thanks," said the old man, as he pocketed the gold.

"We'll be off in er jiffy, an' ef et's posserble ter do et, I'll take ye through ther Narrers."

"All right," said Dick. "And supposing we are stopped by one of the British sloops of war, can't you deceive them into thinking you are going out on a fishing trip?"

"I kin try, but ez fur makin' 'em beleeve et, thet's anuther matter."

"You think you can't do it, then?"

"I'm erfraid I kain't."

"Well, go ahead and do the best you can," said Dick. "If you get through, well and good; if you don't, it can't be helped."

"All right, we'll try et."

The old fisherman went to the door of the little cabin and yelled out:

"Wake up, Sam! Roll up, tumble up an' hurry up erbout et; we've got some work ter do."

A few moments later an awkward-appearing, gangling boy, of about sixteen years, emerged from the cabin.

He was rubbing his eyes as if not yet thoroughly awake.

The old fisherman gave him some order, in a sharp tone, however, and the youth leaped to obey them.

The sloop was cast loose from its moorings and was pushed away from the wharf.

A few minutes later it was headed down the bay, with its bow pointing toward the Narrows.

The old fisherman took the tiller while the boy attended to the sails.

"Ye hed better go inter ther cabin," said the old man to Dick; "we'll stan' er better chance uv foolin' ther British ef thar's nobuddy on deck but me an' ther boy."

Dick recognized the reasonableness of this.

"All right," he said.

Then he made his way to the cabin and entered it.

The fishing smack made its way steadily onward.

It did not move swiftly, as the night was dark and it was necessary to proceed with caution.

The light had been extinguished in the lantern and the deck of the sloop was in darkness.

It would be impossible to slip past the British sloops of war if a light was showing.

For perhaps an hour the sloop moved steadily onward without encountering any obstacle.

Then a light suddenly appeared close at hand.

It was on the deck of one of the British sloops of war.

The dark outlines of the vessel could be seen only a few yards distant.

Then a sharp voice cried out:

"Ahoy, the sloop! Luff, and lie to, you lubber, or we'll blow you out of water!"

CHAPTER IX.

RUNNING THE GANTLET.

"We're in for it now!" thought Dick.

But the old fisherman was made of stern material.

He did not luff, or lie to, at the command of the man on the British vessel.

He held steadily to his course.

"Lie to, I tell you!" roared the voice. "Lie to!"

But the fishing smack still held its course.

Crash! Boom!

The men on the British vessel had fired a shot.

Dick opened the door of the cabin and looked out.

He could see nothing, save a couple of moving lights back in the direction from which the boat was moving.

They were lanterns on the deck of the British sloop of war.

Crash! Boom!

Dick saw the flash from the deck of the British sloop of war.

A solid shot whistled over the deck of the fishing sloop. It would have sunk the little vessel had it struck fairly.

But it missed.

The old sailor stood at the wheel, without flinching.

Evidently he was determined to get away from the edcoat vessel and out through the Narrows, if possible.

Dick left the cabin and walked to where the old man stood at the wheel.

"Do you think we'll make it?" he asked.

"I dunno," was the reply; "we'll keep on tryin', anyhow."

The shots which had been fired aroused those on board the other British sloops of war lying in that vicinity.

Lights could be seen in various directions.

Here and there the sound of excited voices could be heard.

"I'm glad ther cusses air showin' lights," the old sailor remarked, grimly; "et shows me whar they air an' makes t easier fur me to keep frum runnin' inter them."

The little sloop dashed onward.

Its course was altered occasionally so as to keep as far away as possible from the British vessels.

At last all the lights had been passed and the old fisherman breathed a sigh of relief.

"I guess we're all right now," he said; "I don't think har air enny more British sloops atween us an' ther cean."

"Good!" said Dick. "I'm glad of that."

The men on the British sloops of war kept on firing shots from their small cannon, but as they could see nothing, and were firing at random, there was not much danger that they would hit the fishing smack.

It would be a rank accident if they should do so.

None of the shots took effect, though some came quite near.

Onward sailed the sloop.

There was not a pilot in New York who knew the waters of the upper and lower bay better than the old fisherman knew them.

He sailed the sloop through the Narrows and on out toward Sandy Hook.

An hour after leaving the Narrows lights were seen ahead.

"Them lights air on board ther French ships," said the old fisherman; "ye'll be thar purty soon."

He headed the sloop toward what seemed to be the nearest and brightest lights.

Twenty minutes later he skillfully brought the sloop to right alongside a large vessel.

"Ahoy, the ship!" called out the old sailor.

A stir was heard on the deck.

The old sailor's voice had evidently been heard.

Three men suddenly appeared at the rail.

One held a lantern.

He held it in such a way that the rays were thrown downward.

The sloop was revealed to view.

A man with a lantern called out something.

He spoke in French, however, and Dick did not understand what he said.

"Jove! I don't understand that language," said Dick. "What shall we do?"

"He asked who we are and what we want," said the old fisherman.

Dick was surprised.

"Do you understand French?" he asked.

"Yas; I'm er Canadian."

"Good! that is lucky. I will make you my interpreter. Tell that fellow up there that I am a special messenger from General Washington, the commander-in-chief of the patriot army, and I am the bearer of a message from him to the commander of the French fleet."

"All right, I'll do et."

The old fisherman talked to the man with the lantern for a few minutes.

Then he turned to Dick.

"He sez ther commander of ther French fleet is on board this ship, an' fur ye ter cum aboard ter onct."

"All right, I'll do so; tell them to lower the ladder."

The old fisherman addressed a few words to the man at the rail of the French ship and a few moments later a rope ladder was lowered.

"You will wait here till I return?" asked Dick.

"Yas," the old sailor replied.

Seizing hold of the ladder, Dick began climbing it.

He was soon on the deck of the French ship.

Dick happened to think that he could not talk to the French commander.

"Can the boy manage the sloop?" he called down to the old fisherman.

"I guess so," was the reply.

"You come aboard, then," the youth said; "I'll need you to interpret for me."

"All right."

Then the old fisherman climbed aboard.

Dick and the old fisherman were at once conducted to the cabin.

They were told to take seats.

They did so.

Perhaps fifteen minutes passed.

Then the door opened and a man entered the cabin from an inner room.

The newcomer was a very good-looking man, and there was about him that peculiar air of one accustomed to command.

He said something in French.

The old fisherman answered, and then told Dick what the man said.

He also told Dick who the man was.

He was Count Estaing.

He was a very pleasant man, and although Dick could not talk directly to him, he took a liking to the French commander.

He delivered the document which General Washington had given him to deliver, and the count excused himself and withdrew.

"He hez a interpreter uv his own," the fisherman explained; "an' he hez gone ter hev 'im reed ther pappers fur 'im."

The count was gone perhaps half an hour.

When he returned he brought a document with him.

He gave this to Dick.

Through the old fisherman as interpreter he told Dick that the paper was a message to General Washington in reply to the one the youth had brought.

Dick placed the message in his pocket, and, after the interchange of a few more words, he and the old fisherman took their leave

They returned to the sloop and it headed around and started back toward the Narrows.

"Is there no other way of getting back to the city save through the Narrows?" asked Dick.

"None, without we want'er go cl'ar aroun' ther east end uv Long Islan'," was the reply.

This, of course, would take too much time.

So the boat was kept headed in the direction of the Narrows.

"I don' think we will hev much trubble a-gittin' through," the old fisherman said; "I kin perten' thet this is er fishin' smack whut wuz delayed, an' is jes' gittin' back ter Noo York."

"True," said Dick. "Well, I hope we will get through in safety."

And they did.

The British sloops of war were still showing lights, and this made it possible for the sloop to avoid them.

The little vessel finally reached its anchorage at the East River wharf.

Bidding the old fisherman good-by and thanking him for the good work which he had done, Dick went ashore.

It was now about midnight.

The streets were not thronged, but there were still a good many people on them.

Especially was this the case with Broadway.

Of course, the majority of those on the streets were redcoats.

Dick intended to make the trip back to the patriot army that night.

He had plenty of time, however, so he was not in any hurry.

He thought that he might learn something of interest, so he paused occasionally and listened to the conversation of first one and then another group of redcoats.

Dick was glad that he did this.

He learned of an expedition which some British soldiers were going to make next day.

General Washington had an outpost about three miles south from the main encampment at White Plains.

This outpost consisted of about one hundred men.

In some way the redcoats had learned of this.

They were now figuring on going up and trying to capture this outpost.

They were going to take a couple of field pieces with them and go in sufficient force to enable them to capture the outpost quickly.

By so doing, they could accomplish their purpose and

get away before reinforcements could come from White Plains.

It was a very good plan, and would, no doubt, have proven successful had not Dick learned that it was too late made.

He listened to all the details.

When he had learned all that was necessary, he moved on.

Dick made his way up Broadway and down the side street to the livery stable where he had left his horse.

The doors of the livery stable were closed.

Dick pounded upon them, however, and presently aroused the stable boy.

He told the stable boy to bridle and saddle his horse and bring it out at once.

The boy did so.

Dick paid for the keep of the horse, and, mounting, rode away.

He rode steadily northward for an hour and a quarter.

Realizing that he was now in the vicinity of a place where the British pickets were stationed, Dick slowed his horse down to a walk and proceeded cautiously.

He had managed to slip through once before and he thought it possible he might do so again.

He did succeed in doing so.

Probably the pickets were asleep.

Dick reached the patriot encampment at about four o'clock.

Feeling the need of a little rest, Dick made his way to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys," and throwing himself down upon a cot was soon asleep.

He slept a couple of hours.

Then he arose and ate his breakfast with the rest of the youths.

They asked him many questions regarding his adventures of the night before.

Dick answered as many as he could while eating, but as soon as the meal was ended he told the boys he must go and report to General Washington.

Leaving the quarters, he hastened to General Washington's headquarters.

The commander-in-chief had just finished eating breakfast.

As soon as he learned that Dick had arrived, he gave orders for the youth to be admitted.

He greeted Dick eagerly.

"Did you succeed in getting aboard the French warship?" he asked.

"Yes, your excellency," replied Dick, "I succeeded."

"That is good! You are back so soon I feared you might have failed."

"No, your excellency, I succeeded, and I have here a message from the French commander, Count Estaing."

As he spoke, he drew the document from his pocket and handed it to the commander-in-chief.

General Washington took the paper, and, unsealing it, read it from beginning to ending.

That General Washington was pleased by the contents of the paper was evident.

The expression on his face proved this.

"Good!" he exclaimed, "this is eminently and entirely satisfactory. I believe we will be able to retake New York and capture the British warships now lying in New York Harbor."

"I hope so, sir," said Dick.

"Unless something comes up that cannot now be foreseen, we shall certainly be enabled to do so, Dick. Count Estaing says that he will be ready to co-operate with me at any time."

The commander-in-chief was silent for a few moments.

Then he looked at Dick and asked:

"Do you think you could repeat your feat of last night?"

"You mean the trip to New York and going on board the French ship?"

"Yes."

Dick nodded.

"I think I can do so, sir. I shall be not only willing, but glad to make the attempt, at any rate."

"Very good," said the commander-in-chief. "Come here this afternoon at four o'clock and I will give you a message to be taken to Count Estaing."

"I will be here, sir; and now I have some further information for you, and a favor to ask at your hands."

"What is it, Dick?"

Dick told him of the attempt that was to be made to capture the outpost.

"This is interesting and important information, indeed, Dick!" the commander-in-chief exclaimed. "We must put a stop to the scheme of the redcoats."

"So we must, your excellency; and the favor which I would ask is that you let myself and 'Liberty Boys' take the matter in hand."

"I shall be only too glad to do so, Dick," said the commander-in-chief, promptly. "I think I had better send reinforcements to the garrison, however, in addition to the 'Liberty Boys,' as the redcoats will, no doubt, come in force."

"Oh, yes, send as many men as you like, your excellency."

I simply ask that myself and 'Liberty Boys' have a hand in the matter."

"Very well, Dick; it shall be as you wish. I will send three hundred men to the outpost to reinforce those who are there, and I give you permission to take your 'Liberty Boys' and engage in the affair in any manner which you think best."

"Very well, and thank you, sir; we will do the best we can to make the redcoats' scheme a failure."

"I am sure of that, Dick."

Dick took his departure from headquarters and made his way back to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys."

When he told the youths what was on the tapis, they became greatly excited.

"This promised to be work exactly to their liking."

CHAPTER X.

DARING WORK.

Bob Estabrook was greatly excited.

"Hurrah!" he cried. "This is going to be something to do, sure enough! I'm glad something has come up. I'm tired of sitting around here, waiting for the redcoats to do something."

The others were all of the same mind.

Preparations were at once begun for the work.

The youths decided to ride their horses.

This was in accordance with a plan which Dick had formed.

He wished to bring the "Liberty Boys" in as an extra force.

His plan was to let the British attack the outpost and engage it in battle.

He would remain in the background with his "Liberty Boys."

Then at the proper time he would have the "Liberty Boys" charge the redcoats.

This would, he was sure, turn the tide of battle in favor of the patriots.

General Washington had given orders that three hundred men be sent to the outpost to reinforce it, and the soldiers started at once.

They left an hour ahead of the "Liberty Boys."

As they had to walk, however, they would not reach the outpost much ahead of the youths.

When they were ready, the "Liberty Boys" mounted their horses and rode away.

Half an hour later they were at the outpost.

Dick had a talk with the officer in charge.

He saw that all necessary arrangement had been made and felt that the patriots would be able to give the redcoats an unpleasant surprise.

Dick gave the order, and his "Liberty Boys" made their way to a clump of timber perhaps a hundred yards on one side of the outpost.

Here they secreted themselves.

"We will have to be on the watch and hold ourselves in readiness for prompt action," said Dick, "for we don't know at what moment the redcoats may put in an appearance."

"That's right, Dick," agreed Bob, "but I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll climb one of these trees, and then I will be able to see the redcoats long before they get here."

"That's a good idea, Bob; go ahead."

Bob and two or three more "Liberty Boys" climbed clear into the top of one of the largest trees and found that they had a splendid view from there.

Perhaps an hour passed.

Then down from the treetop came the words:

"They're coming!"

"We see them!"

"How far away are they?" asked Dick.

"About two miles."

"All right; keep your eyes on them. I'll go over to the outpost and put them on their guard."

"All right; we'll keep our eyes on them."

Dick hastened over to the outpost.

"They're coming!" he said to the officer in command.

"Are they?" excitedly. "How far are they away?"

"Nearly two miles."

"Ah! That will give me plenty of time to get everything in readiness to receive them."

"Yes."

Dick and the officer superintended this work, the youths giving a number of valuable suggestions.

When this was finished Dick returned to where his "Liberty Boys" were.

Bob and his comrades in the treetop kept Dick posted regarding the progress made by the British.

Dick asked how many redcoats he thought there were.

"Jove! there looks as if there might be a thousand of them, Dick," was the reply. "There is seven or eight hundred, at least calculation."

Dick looked sober.

"That is a force of nearly two to one against us," he thought. "It will be a pretty hard fight."

He went over to the outpost and told the officer in command how many there were of the redcoats.

The officer looked sober.

"This is going to be a pretty serious affair, after all," said. "I wish we had more men."

"It is now too late to get them," said Dick. "Well, I think we will be enough for them. You give it to them, hot and heavy, and then we will come down upon them and make them think a large reinforcing force is at hand. I think that will prove to be more than they can stand."

"I hope so."

The two talked for several minutes and decided upon their course of action.

Then Dick returned to the point where his "Liberty Boys" were stationed.

Bob and the other youths in the treetop kept Dick posted regarding the progress being made by the redcoats.

As the redcoats drew nearer, the interest and excitement among the "Liberty Boys" increased.

When the redcoats were half a mile distant, Bob and his comrades came down out of the trees.

The youths mounted their horses.

They wished to be in readiness to make the dash when the time should come.

Of course, the British force advanced slowly.

It was half an hour before the redcoats were within attacking distance.

They planted their field pieces in the middle of the road.

As soon as they had gotten the field pieces in position, the redcoats opened fire.

The battle was on.

The redcoats kept firing and advancing.

The patriots returned the fire.

Doubtless the redcoats were surprised by the reception given them.

They had supposed that there were not more than one hundred men in the outpost.

The fire with which they were greeted proved to them that there were two or three times that many men.

They would still outnumber the patriots so greatly, however, that they imagined they would have an easy time defeating their enemies.

So they went ahead with the attack.

The battle raged fiercely.

The patriots made a strong defense.

They knew there was a surprise in store for the redcoats.

They were well aware of the fighting abilities of the Liberty Boys."

They knew that when they appeared on the scene there would be lively times.

The redcoats would think they were struck by a cyclone.

So the patriots fought fiercely and waited for the appearance of the "Liberty Boys."

The redcoats advanced slowly.

They came closer and closer.

Dick was watching them closely.

He waited till he was confident the redcoats were getting ready to charge.

He did not wish to let them do this.

Dick was determined that he and his "Liberty Boys" would do the charging.

He gave the command for all to be ready.

The youths gathered up the bridle reins with their left hands and drew their sabers with their right hands.

They sat erect and rigid, awaiting the order to charge.

The order was not long delayed.

Dick kept his eyes on the redcoats, and seizing upon the moment when the enemy was getting ready to charge, he gave the command.

"Forward, 'Liberty Boys!' Charge the scoundrels!"

Instantly the "Liberty Boys" were in motion.

Forward dashed the hundred horsemen.

The hoofs of the animals sounded like distant thunder as they pounded the hard ground.

As the youths dashed out of the timber they set up a wild yell.

The redcoats were taken by surprise.

The charge which they were on the point of making was postponed indefinitely.

They turned their attention to the newcomers.

They opened fire on the youths.

The fire was something terrific, but the "Liberty Boys" dashed on regardless of everything save the cause they were fighting for.

"On, boys, don't falter!" yelled Dick, waving his sword.

A number of the "Liberty Boys" went down, either dead or wounded, but the rest did not falter.

They dashed forward in the most reckless manner imaginable.

As they drew near the redcoats the "Liberty Boys" gave utterance to their battle cry:

"Down with the king! Long live Liberty!"

The next instant they were in among the redcoats.

Then the bright blades of the sabers flashed in the sunlight.

The youths were expert with the saber.

They knew how to use the weapon.

They were terrors at close quarters.

It did not take them long to create consternation in the ranks of the enemy.

Soon there was no semblance of order in the arrangement of the British force.

The British soldiers became demoralized.

Confusion reigned supreme.

The "Liberty Boys" made the most of the situation.

They cut the redcoats down, mercilessly.

It was war, and no time to show mercy.

The idea of war is to injure the enemy as much as possible, to kill as many of the opposing men as possible, and this was what the "Liberty Boys" were doing.

They cheered as they fought.

During the time the youths were at this, the patriot soldiers refrained from firing, as they would have done as much damage to the "Liberty Boys" as to the redcoats.

It is said that the Turkish troops go into battle singing.

This, of course, is rather trying to the nerves of the soldiers of the opposing army.

The cheering of the "Liberty Boys" had much the same effect on the nerves of the redcoats.

It unnerved them.

The result was that they presently became completely demoralized, and fled for their lives.

They left their field pieces, and more than a hundred dead and wounded men behind them.

The patriots had lost about twenty.

The soldiers in the outpost all declared that it was the daring work of the "Liberty Boys" which had won the day.

This was usually the way.

The "Liberty Boys" never hesitated to risk their lives for Liberty's cause.

When they returned to the main encampment at White Plains, and General Washington heard the story of the battle, he complimented Dick highly.

"You and your 'Liberty Boys' have done splendidly," he said; "I am proud of you."

"We have tried to do our duty, sir," replied Dick, quietly.

Then the commander-in-chief told Dick to be sure and be ready to take the message to Count Estaing, commander of the French fleet.

"I will come for the message at four o'clock, your excellency," said Dick.

"Very well."

Dick was on hand at the appointed time.

He took the message and placed it in his pocket.

After an early supper Dick mounted his horse and set out.

He reached New York and succeeded in finding the old fisherman who had taken him aboard the French ship the other time.

They succeeded in running the gantlet again, and Dick delivered the message and brought away one.

Dick succeeded in getting safely back to the patriot encampment at White Plains and delivered the message to the commander-in-chief the following morning.

General Washington was well pleased.

"Now I think we will soon have possession of New York," he said. "Count Estaing is going to bring his vessels into New York Harbor, force the British ships to surrender, or sink them; and then assist me to compel the surrender of the land forces in New York City."

"I hope everything will work around all right, your excellency," said Dick, heartily.

But it did not.

A strange obstacle presented itself when the plan was tried.

The obstacle was the bar extending across from Long Island to the New Jersey coast.

This bar made it impossible for some of the largest ships of the French fleet to enter the harbor.

After careful investigation by the best pilots, it was decided that it would be unsafe for these ships to venture upon the bar even at high tide.

The result was that the plan for the recapture of New York had to be abandoned.

General Washington was deeply disappointed.

If the French ships could have entered the harbor, the rest would have been easy.

The British ships would have been captured or sunk, and New York would have been recaptured.

It was not to be, however, and the iron-hearted Washington accepted the matter philosophically, and began studying up some other plan for striking the enemy a severe blow.

THE END.

The next number (37) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain the story, "THE LIBERTY BOYS' PRIZE, AND HOW THEY WON IT."

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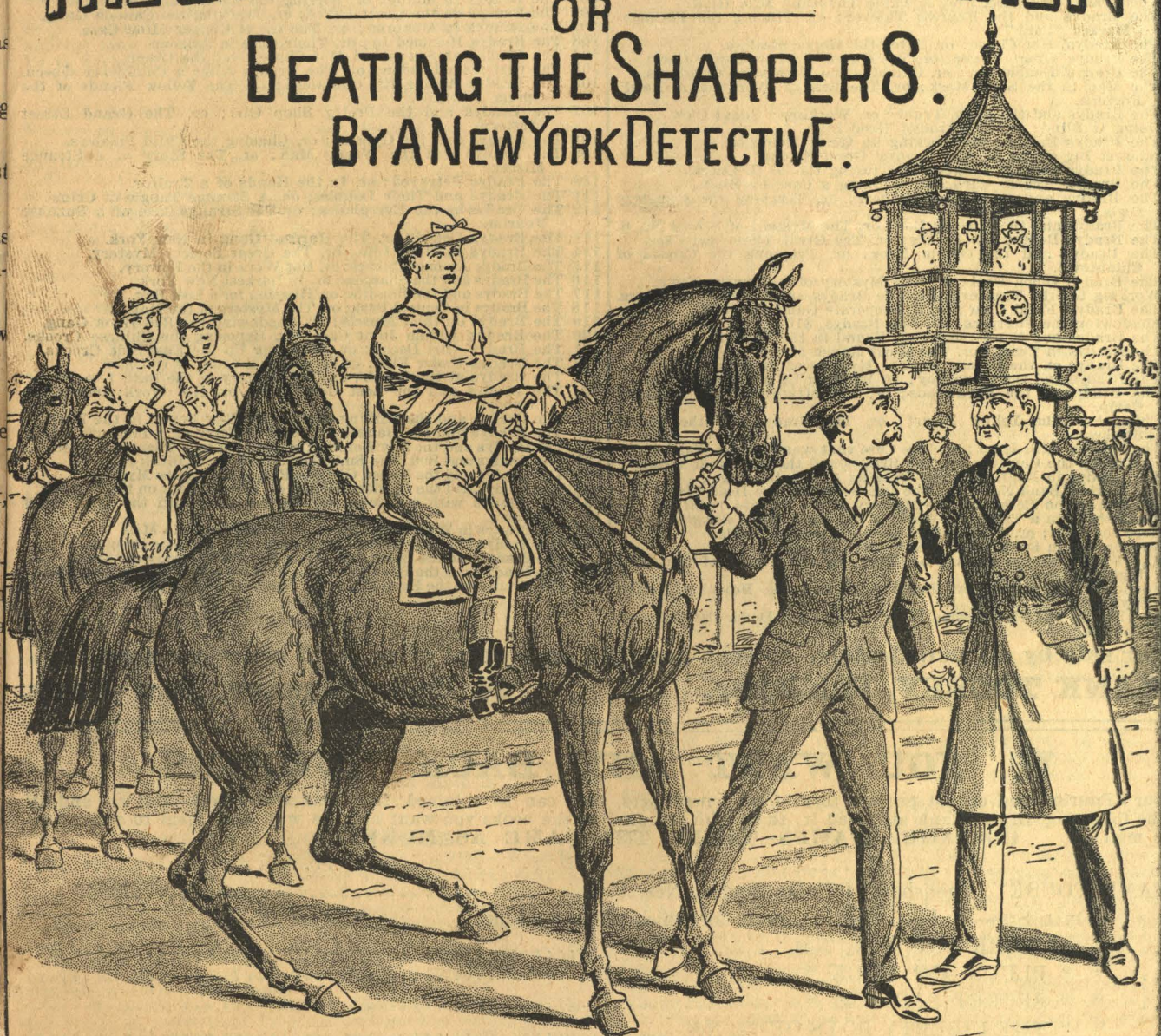
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